

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

**Rep. Michael Burgess**, Chair, Health Subcommittee

**Rep. Gene Green**, Ranking Member, Health Subcommittee

## **INTRODUCTION**

Thank you all for being here to shine a light on the devastating epidemic of opioid addiction.

Opioid addiction is inflicting a savage daily toll on Americans – regardless of who they are, where they live or how much money they make.

This scourge is tearing apart families and hollowing out communities. It is claiming the lives of tens of thousands of Americans every year – robbing an average of 91 people of their lives each day and driving down the national life expectancy.

Opioid addiction is a public health catastrophe. And it is growing more dire and deadly each day.

## **SERIOUS, URGENT ACTION**

We must respond to this national emergency with the seriousness and urgency it requires.

We must increase funding and improve capacity, so that health systems and providers can offer high-quality, evidence-based opioid addiction treatment, including medication-assisted treatment and recovery support services.

It is unacceptable that our nation lacks the capacity to treat nearly half of the men and women who suffer from opioid use disorders;

We must also improve access to treatment – combatting the stigmas, cost and misperceptions that prevent people from accessing care.

And we must work with providers on effective prevention measures – so we can limit opioid supply, and stop this epidemic at the source.

## **CARA FUNDING**

Fortunately, Congress has already created the tools to improve prevention and expand access to care.

Last year, Democrats and Republicans worked together to pass the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act – a landmark bill to provide the full continuum of care to those suffering from opioid addiction.

But, unfortunately, the Republican Congress has so far failed to adequately fund the key initiatives authorized by this bill.

There is no room for politics in the life-or-death fight against opioid addiction. We cannot shortchange the resources needed to fight the tragedy of opioid addiction in our country.

Congress is appropriating billions to rebuild communities after natural disasters – we must show a similar commitment to rebuilding communities ravaged by opioids.

## **ACA MEDICAID EXPANSION**

We must also build on the progress of the ACA's Medicaid expansion, which has provided a vital lifeline for tens of thousands of Americans struggling with opioid addiction.

As Ohio Governor John Kasich noted, "Thank God we expanded Medicaid because that Medicaid money is helping to rehab people."

Yet, 19 states still have not taken the step of extending the life-saving benefits of Medicaid coverage. We must work with states to expand Medicaid, so we can bring urgently needed care to men and women fighting for their lives.

Democrats stand ready to work in good faith with Republicans to update and improve the ACA. But we will remain vigilant against any effort to gut Medicaid or create higher costs for less care for families.

## **CLOSE**

The opioid epidemic is a challenge to the conscience of the entire country.

We must act urgently and boldly to get America's families the prevention, treatment and recovery resources they need. Thank you, all, for your leadership in this fight.

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